SCAMS AND INDICATORS

PARCEL SCAMS

A parcel scam is a type of 419 scam where victims are asked to pay in advance for courier fees for goods. They expect a parcel from a "loved one" whose identity cannot be verified.

INDICATORS

- Unexpected contact from someone overseas via social media.
- Promises of a romantic relationship.
- The love interest states they intend to spoil the victim by sending a parcel with valuables, including a large amount of cash.
- Unsuccessful video call or in-person meeting with the love interest.
- Receive a call from a courier company or airport staff from a cell phone number, not a landline, requesting that money needs to be sent for clearance fees.
- The love interest's accent does not match their description or their stated country of origin.
- Asked to remit funds to an individual's name instead of a courier company's name.

MODUS OPERANDI

The parcel syndicate attracts victims through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as direct messages on WhatsApp for a love interest. They target women in various countries, of all ages ,who appear to be lonely based on their social media profiles.
The syndicate often sends private messages to victims initiating a friendship before pursuing a so-called romantic relationship. They further entice their victim with a prospective well-paying job while they claim to be lonely and are looking for someone to visit in Africa.
After trust is established, they at times send photos of "themselves", and claim they will send the victim a package with valuables, including cash. The syndicate often sends a picture of the parcel as 'proof' of authenticity.
After a few days, the victim receives a call from someone purporting to be calling from a courier company or the airport . They claim to have received a parcel in the victim's name and request a fee to release the package. Once the victim remits the first fee, the syndicate continues to solicit more clearance payments until the victim either gives up or deduces that it is a scam. The 'clearance fees' are often from R5 000 and upwards.
The money remitter monitors these transactions and suspends the accounts involved. Names of the recipients used to collect the funds are blacklisted. All transactions are reported by the money remitter to the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) and customers are educated on risk indicators relating to scams.

TAKE ACTION! This is what you can do

- Always verify the identity of the person you are in contact with.
- Do not pay any fees without doing a background check on the courier company.
- Do not send funds to an individual you have never physically met nor whose identity cannot be verified.
- Does this feel "too good to be true"? Then, it probably is.
- Conduct fraud awareness campaigns at your place of business.
- File suspicious and unusual transaction reports with the FIC.

Case study provided by:

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www.fic.gov.za